

would be a grave error that both parties would live to regret.

I hope that all Senate Democrats will recommit themselves to preserving this fundamental feature of the Senate and to find compromise. We have work to do.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF ANTONY JOHN BLINKEN

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, today we will be considering the nomination of Antony Blinken to be President Biden's Secretary of State.

The problem I have with this nomination is that, for decades now, we have been at war in Afghanistan. The war is now called "the forever war." People lament that it goes on so long, and people say: How could it possibly keep going on?

Sixty-five to seventy percent of the American people, 65 to 70 percent of American veterans—veterans who served in the theater—say the war is enough. We should end the war in Afghanistan. How does it go on? We have got a new President. Are things going to change?

Here is the problem: Why do the wars continue? Why do the wars in Syria and Libya and Somalia and Afghanistan continue? Because the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Mr. Blinken has been a full-throated advocate of military intervention in the Middle East for 20 years. We are fooling ourselves if we think we are going to get a new policy. We are going to get more of the same.

In his hearing, I said to him: "The problem isn't that we don't compromise or that we don't have bipartisan consensus; the problem is we have too much bipartisan consensus for war."

For 20 years, he has advocated for military intervention. He advocated for the Iraq war, as did the President. President Biden was also an advocate of the Iraq war.

Now, later on they said: Well, the war wasn't that great of an idea, but we were lied to by George Bush and the intelligence, and I am willing to admit there is some truth to that. But there is a bigger lesson here. The lesson is that regime change doesn't work.

They often get unintended consequences, and you often get the opposite of what you think you are getting. They said: We must go to Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein because he is a terrible dictator. Well, yes, he was a despot, a dictator, an autocrat. You know, he wreaked havoc on his people, probably gassed the Kurds—many different

horrible things. And yet, when he was gone, what did we get? We got a power vacuum. We got more terrorism. We are back in there 10 years later because the government is nonfunctional. And what is the final result? Iran is stronger.

What does everybody talk about? Iran, Iran, Iran. Why do we worry about Iran? Well, because we toppled their biggest adversary. We used to have a balance of power between Iraq and Iran—despot on one side, despot on the other but at least a balance of power.

But who is Iran's best ally now? Iraq. Think about it. Iraq is allied with Iran. Iraq is also allied, in many ways, with Russia, as well as us, but they have also asked us to leave. They are like: Oh, thanks for our freedom, but you all can take off now.

But who supported the war? President Biden, Antony Blinken. We are back where we were 20 years ago.

Now, like I say, there is some retrenchment, there is some backing off of the position, but I don't hear from either President Biden, Candidate Biden, or from Antony Blinken that regime change is wrong.

Now, if it were wrong, you would expect there was a learning from the Iraq war, and they would say: OK. Now that we are in charge, we won't do the same.

But it turns out, when we had an Obama administration, with Blinken and the other military interventionists, in a supposedly progressive administration, we got more war. They went into Libya. Once again, the same sort of idea—the idea that regime change works, and that we will topple this terrible dictator, Qadhafi, and out of the mist, out of the embers, out of the fire will arise Thomas Jefferson. The Thomas Jefferson of Libya will take over and freedom will reign. It didn't work out so much.

So Mr. Blinken, in his hearing, admitted as much. He said: Well, maybe we overestimated the possibility that there would be rivals to replace him. Do you think?

But, see, this is sort of the expected pattern of the Middle East. The Middle East doesn't have this 1,000-year English tradition of trying to control central power, dating back to even before the Magna Carta.

But even 350 years ago, the English had a revolution trying to restrain the power of the King; 250 years ago we had our revolution to further restrain the power of the King. We have this long-standing tradition.

But in the Middle East, there is more of this tradition of tribalism, and so you have an iron fist, but when you get rid of the iron fist, it is replaced by another iron fist or nothing—by chaos.

So in Libya you get rid of Qadhafi—supported by President Obama, Vice President Biden, Antony Blinken. You have the toppling of Qadhafi, but what did you get? Chaos. More terrorism. It is unclear even whom we support—whether we support the current gov-

ernment, the U.N. government, or General Haftar, or whom we support.

The Middle East is divided, arms are flowing in on both sides, and like we always do, we fan the flames by shipping arms to everybody in the region as well. It didn't work.

So Mr. Blinken acknowledges: Yes, we underestimated the possibility there would be a rival government or a rival faction strong enough to rule Libya. Well, yeah.

So did they learn their lesson? No. About this time or a little bit later, they decided: We must go into Syria. So they spent about \$500 million—\$500 million—to train about 60 fighters. They did it in a remote area of Syria and they got them trained and they spent their \$500 million and they sent 10 of them into battle. They were all captured or killed in the first 20 minutes. Five hundred million to train sixty of the so-called moderates. But guess what. The same holds for Syria that held for Iraq, that held for Libya, that now holds for Syria. Guess what. Another despot.

But who are the people fighting against the despot? The most fierce fighters in Syria all along were al-Nusra and al-Qaida. The more jihadists, the more vicious and violent and the better the fighters were.

Were there doctors and lawyers and academics and people who want a secular form of government? Sure. But the people out there fighting and the people winning the battles were the jihadists.

So there was always the danger, if you get rid of Assad, we get another jihadist regime.

So we have to think through the policy of this. But Blinken and Biden both supported the Iraq war. It was an utter failure. They admit as much. They supported the Libyan deposing of Qadhafi and war. Then they acknowledge: Well, maybe it wasn't the best—but then they don't take any learning or knowledge from that and say: Maybe we shouldn't go into the next one—Syria. And yet, they went into Syria.

And what Blinken's response is should tell you a little bit about the danger of what we may get from Blinken as Secretary of State.

He said the problem in Syria was not doing too much but doing too little. He said: What we really should have done is gone in with full might. If we had put 100,000 troops in there, like we did in Afghanistan and like we did in Iraq, if we would have used sufficient enough force, we could have toppled Assad. But in the end, he said: We didn't do enough.

So the lesson to Blinken and Biden and this administration isn't that regime change doesn't work; it is that if we are going to do it, we need to go bigger. We need to go all in.

I would posit that regime change doesn't work; that we should not support evil regimes. If they are despots or dictators, we shouldn't arm them. But I am not for toppling every one of them

either because I am not so sure what you get next.

So how would this be in the real world? Saudi Arabia has shown themselves to be an autocratic, anti-woman, anti-modern administration that would actually kill a journalist and dismember him. They were rewarded by the previous administration with arms. Terrible idea.

But what would we do if there was a rational, realistic—more realism in foreign policy? We would not topple the Government of Saudi Arabia, but we might not sell them arms. I think that would be a reasonable thing.

We also might not sell them arms because they were committing atrocities and killing civilians in the war in Yemen. But if you look back at the war in Yemen, the Obama-Biden administration did not have very strong opposition to the war in Yemen. They do now, but in the beginning, they didn't.

And so the supplying of weaponry and bombs and smart bombs to Saudi Arabia occurred under the Obama-Biden administration and then continued under the Trump administration.

So we have to ask ourselves: We have so many unintended consequences; how will we ever make things different?

Now, our Founding Fathers envisioned something different. Our Founding Fathers envisioned that war should be difficult. It was James Madison who said that the executive branch is most prone to war and, therefore, the Constitution, with studied care, vested that power in the legislature. To declare war was to be split between the House and the Senate and by a majority vote to declare war. We don't do that. It is *passe*. Oh, that is an anachronism, some say.

And when Antony Blinken was asked about this, when he was asked about a use of authorization of force—he was asked: Do you need it? And this was when he was working for the Obama-Biden administration. And he said: Oh, we would welcome discussion and debate and advice from the Senate, but, you know, we don't really need it.

Now, he is not alone in this. This isn't a Democratic or Republican thing. This is most of the foreign policy establishment in both parties, particularly once they work for a President. They will tell you, yes, they will listen to your advice. Oh, we really welcome your coming down. Please come down. We would love to sit down and have tea. But, really, don't tell us what to do. We can do whatever we want under article II.

And you think, well gosh, that sounds harsh. It sounds like you are describing Blinken as some sort of John Bolton. Yeah. There are similarities, but there are similarities between both parties when they get to the executive branch that they don't think they need Congress's permission. This is a real problem.

So some in the Senate have tried to narrow the definition of where a war would be, and I looked at their nar-

rower definition last time and I said: Well, yeah, you would narrow it from the whole world to 24 countries. I don't want to be at war in those 24 countries either.

Think about it. We have more military action in Africa right now than we do in the Middle East. Somalia, Mali, all throughout Africa we have got troops.

We had four soldiers die a little over a year ago in Mali, and people were like: We have 800 soldiers in Mali? No one even knew. People on the Armed Services Committee were like: We have 800 soldiers in Mali? And yet that goes on without our permission. Without a vote of the people's representatives, without consulting the people at all, it just goes on and on and on.

So my opposition of Mr. Blinken to be Secretary of State is not so much because I oppose the administration; it is because I oppose the bipartisan consensus for war.

If we are ever to end these wars, we are going to need to not keep nominating the same retreads who have gotten us into these wars.

So I will vote against Mr. Blinken because I am against war. I am against war that is not declared by Congress. I am against war that is executed primarily by the President. I am against them doing it without the permission of the people.

So I will oppose Mr. Blinken's nomination. I don't think I will get many people from the other side. It is difficult to vote against nominees of one's own party, but I will say that if we are ever to end war, we need to have a real discussion in this body about when we go to war, whether or not we have to declare war, and we have to talk about whether our involvements have worked in the Middle East, whether or not there are unintended consequences. Instead of saying "Oh, it was all George Bush's fault. It was faulty intelligence"—yeah, yeah, there is some truth to that, but it is really about regime change. It is about the idea that we know what is best for everyone else and that by putting a new regime involved in a country in the Middle East, somehow it is going to be better. It usually turns out worse.

So I hope my colleagues will today consider voting against Mr. Blinken because I think he is more of the same.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 3 minutes on the nomination of Tony Blinken for Secretary of State.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I bring to the floor this morning the nomination of Tony Blinken to be Secretary of State. He has been nominated, of course, by President Biden, and this is brought by Senator MENENDEZ and me. We have had the honored privilege of working together to move as rapidly as we could Mr. Blinken's nomination.

Obviously, these things do take some time, and we are fortunate to be able to bring it as quickly as we have to the floor.

This is, in my judgment, certainly the most important nominee that there will be to the President's Cabinet in light of a number of things but not the least of which is they are in the line of succession for the Presidency.

Mr. Blinken has a long and distinguished history when it comes to statecraft and foreign relations matters. Certainly, he is very qualified for this job. Obviously, we don't agree on all things. Nobody ever does.

I will say that there are 200 countries, approximately, on the planet, and each one of them has unique and very distinguished issues.

In speaking with Mr. Blinken on these matters, I find that there is a tremendous amount of agreement that he and I have. Obviously, whenever these things happen, there are areas of disagreement, and obviously the media and a lot of people focus on these.

I should mention that at least one of those—Iran—is a very wide disagreement that we have. In my judgment, the JCPOA was a colossal failure and a real blunder for American policy overseas. In talking with Mr. Blinken, he does not share that view, and obviously he is going to work with the President, carrying the President's water to get us back into the JCPOA. I think that is a mistake. We have talked about this at length, and certainly whatever the consequences of that are, those who do it are going to have to live with it.

I can state that this is not a partisan issue. There are people on both sides of the aisle who have real reservations about going back into the JCPOA, particularly if there aren't very significant sideboards put on that. The effort is going to be made, and we will advise as we can and go down that pike.

Again, I say that this is one issue. Out of the many, many issues that we discussed, there was very little—in fact, no daylight between us on some of them. A good example of that would be Turkey. I think Mr. Blinken shares my reservations about Turkey, and, again, the vast majority of this body, the U.S. Senate, has deep, deep reservations about the direction that Turkey is going.

In any event, we need a Secretary of State, and this is the person for the job.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. LUJÁN). The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I just remark how quickly you have risen in the Senate. So we welcome you here.

I rise today in support of Tony Blinken's nomination to be Secretary

of State. I want to thank Senator RISCH for working with me expeditiously to get this nomination to the floor, and I appreciate his work and common cause to achieve it.

We all know Mr. Blinken has impressive credentials. He was confirmed by the Senate as Deputy Secretary of State, and before that, he served as the Deputy National Security Advisor and as the staff director at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. But apart from his extensive experience, he showed in almost 5 hours of hearing testimony that he is thoughtful, willing, able to grapple with the most complex challenging issues facing our country, and committed to engaging Congress, and he did so on both sides of the aisle.

Not surprisingly, the Foreign Relations Committee reported him out by an overwhelming bipartisan vote.

Now, some in this body may not be aware of Mr. Blinken's family tradition, which reflects the best of this country in two ways: our history of welcoming those in need of refuge and the contributions that immigrants and refugees have made in the service of our Nation.

Mr. Blinken's family came here fleeing persecution. His grandfather, Maurice Blinken, fled Russian pogroms. His father's wife, Vera Blinken, fled communist Hungary, and his late stepfather, Samuel Pizar, survived Nazi concentration camps and met the first U.S. soldiers he saw with the only English words he knew: God bless America. And from that family, our country has benefitted from the service of two Ambassadors, an Assistant Secretary, and a Deputy Secretary of State—what a testament to the power of the American Dream.

Mr. Blinken must be confirmed so we can start addressing the challenges we face abroad. Every day there is an event or calamity across the globe, and whether it is a massacre in Ethiopia or democratic protests in Russia, we need U.S. leadership and engagement to chart our foreign policy through these troubling times.

We now have a COVID vaccine, but troubling new variants and strains are appearing in the United Kingdom and South Africa. We need a confirmed Secretary of State and a robust State Department to revitalize the traditional U.S. role as a leader on global health issues. This is just one of the many things we have to do to bring this pandemic to an end both in this country and abroad.

It is also important that Mr. Blinken be confirmed to help address the challenges we face closer to home. The State Department is suffering from a historic crisis stemming from low morale, the departure over the past 4 years of many of our most experienced diplomats, and the lack of accountability for the political leadership at the top during the last 4 years. Mr. Blinken's experience and expertise is necessary to begin to repair the damage and rebuild the State Department.

Moreover, the Office of Secretary of State is fourth in the Presidential line of succession and is one of the most important national security positions in the government. To paraphrase former Secretary of Defense James Mattis, if we do not support diplomacy, our Armed Forces will ultimately need more ammunition. He was right. Robust diplomacy means that we are less likely to have to send our sons and daughters to fight wars, and it means more opportunities for Americans and American businesses abroad.

I strongly support Mr. Blinken's nomination today because he is the right person for the job and because we cannot afford to leave this post vacant any longer. I hope my colleagues will all join me.

With that, I yield the floor.

VOTE ON BLINKEN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Blinken nomination?

Mr. MENENDEZ. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 78, nays 22, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 7 Ex.]

YEAS—78

Baldwin	Heinrich	Risch
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Romney
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rosen
Blunt	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Booker	Inhofe	Rubio
Brown	Johnson	Sanders
Burr	Kaine	Sasse
Cantwell	Kelly	Schatz
Capito	King	Schumer
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Carper	Leahy	Sinema
Casey	Lujan	Smith
Collins	Manchin	Stabenow
Cooms	Markey	Sullivan
Cornyn	McConnell	Tester
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Thune
Crapo	Merkley	Tillis
Duckworth	Moran	Toomey
Durbin	Murkowski	Van Hollen
Feinstein	Murphy	Warner
Fischer	Murray	Warnock
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Warren
Graham	Padilla	Whitehouse
Grassley	Peters	Wicker
Hagerty	Portman	Wyden
Hassan	Reed	Young

NAYS—22

Barrasso	Daines	Marshall
Blackburn	Ernst	Paul
Boozman	Hawley	Scott (FL)
Braun	Hoeven	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	Kennedy	Shelby
Cotton	Lankford	Tuberville
Cramer	Lee	
Cruz	Lummis	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session and will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Kentucky.

IMPEACHMENT

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, this impeachment is nothing more than a partisan exercise designed to further divide the country. Democrats claim to want to unify the country, but impeaching a former President, a private citizen, is the antithesis of unity.

Democrats brazenly appointing a pro-impeachment Democrat to preside over the trial is not fair or impartial and hardly encourages any kind of unity in our country. No, unity is the opposite of this travesty we are about to witness.

If we are about to try to impeach a President, where is the Chief Justice?

If the accused is no longer President, where is the constitutional power to impeach him?

Private citizens don't get impeached. Impeachment is for removal from office, and the accused here has already left office.

Hyperpartisan Democrats are about to drag our great country down into the gutter of rancor and vitriol, the likes of which has never been seen in our Nation's history.

Instead of doing the Nation's work, with their new majorities in the House, the Senate, and the executive branch, Democrats are wasting the Nation's time on a partisan vendetta against a man no longer in office. It is almost as if they have no ability to exist except in opposition to Donald Trump. Without him as their boogeyman, they might have to legislate and to actually convince Americans that their policy prescriptions are the right ones.

Democrats are about to do something no self-respecting Senator has ever stooped to. Democrats are insisting the election is actually not over, and so they insist on regurgitating the bitterness of the election.

This acrimony they are about to unleash has never before been tried. Why? Because calmer heads have typically prevailed in our history and allowed public opinion to cast blame where blame is deserved.

This sham of an impeachment will ostensibly ask whether the President incited the reprehensible behavior and violence of January 6, when he said: "I know everyone here will soon march to the Capitol to peacefully and patriotically make your voices heard."

"Peacefully and patriotically"—hardly words of violence.

But what of Democrat words? What of Democrat incitement to violence?

No Democrat will honestly ask whether BERNIE SANDERS incited the